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THE SONNETS OF MICHAEL DRAYTON.

IN the Elizabethan sonnet the note of personality is slight, the note of conventionality is strong—and the note of real passion is seldom uttered. In a suggestive classification, we find a number of sonnets somewhat autobiographical with amatory inspiration. Here might be placed those of Sidney and Spenser. Sidney's sonnets may have reflected a passion for Lady Rich. But Petrarch was an inspiration to Sidney, and Petrarch's passion for Laura was more or less Platonic. In the midst of his strains to his mistress, we note his Sonnet 40: "Padre del Ciel, dopo i perduti giorni." Spenser's cycle may have been addressed to the lady that became his wife; but they bear an Italian title, *Amoretti*; and he was largely influenced by Petrarch and Du Bellay.

Other sonnet groups are but slightly autobiographical, with no amatory inspiration. They are dictated by friendship or by mere conventionality. Here I place Drayton's *Idea*. Here, too, are found Surrey's Geraldine sonnets, Daniel's *Delia*, Constable's *Diana*, and many other sequences.

Drayton's sonnets were first published in 1594—fifty-three in number. After revision, elimination, and addition, the folio of 1619 contained sixty-three sonnets, as we now have them. They are typical of all of their author's work. Less grace and art are found in them than in the *Amoretti* or the *Delia*. They show metrical ease. Some are mediocre; some are good; a few are of the best; one is excellent. There is an infusion of conceit. They embrace much of the current sonnet convention and sonnet diction. They also display an originality of thought and diction that emanates wholly from Drayton. The long process of revision from 1594 to 1619 precludes any notion of logically connected sequence. Some may be addressed to a lady; some may be addressed to anybody or nobody. Sonnet 11 seems to be addressed to a man. Sonnet 8 is hardly addressed by a lover to his mistress.

The relations of the sonneteers, one to another, is complicated.

Drayton was in the very center of the sonnet vogue, and his influence upon others and their influence upon him are hard to determine. These influences are interdependent and reciprocal.

In his valuable *Biographical Chronicle of the Elizabethan Drama* Mr. Fleay has gone to extremes in a theory that Shakspeare drew his sonnet material from Drayton much in the same way that he drew *Julius Cæsar* from Plutarch. Mr. Fleay assumes that Shakspeare's sonnets follow Drayton's in time; that Drayton's influence is direct and forceful; that Shakspeare's dependence upon our author is not general; but that it is one of word, thought, structure, and content.

In regard to the relations between these two sonnet sequences, the composition of each series was spread over a long period of time. Drayton spent twenty-five years in putting his into their final form of 1619. Shakspeare's had then been published for a decade. In his argument, Mr. Fleay overlooks the point that our two authors may have drawn from a common sonnet reservoir. The terms, conceits, and thoughts that are common to these two writers are common to the sonnet vogue.

Mr. Fleay traces a similarity of terms, such as "lines," "wrinkles," "map," "mortgage," "usury," "wire," terms wholly familiar in ordinary use, but here of special application. The same terms are frequent in the other sonneteers: "Lines" and "wrinkles" are found in *Zepheria*, 27. *Fidessa*, 11, has the verse: "Upon my face the *map* of discontent." The legal terms are used in many places: *Fidessa*, 5 and 6; *Zepheria*, 37; *Parthenophil and Parthenope*, 7, 8, 20. The use of "wire" to designate hair is an ordinary conceit: notice it in Shakspeare, 130; *Parthenophil*, 47; *Phyllis*, 7 and 9; *Fidessa*, 39; *Chloris*, 9; *Delia*, 35; and earlier by Spenser and Peele. Shakspeare's figure, "rhetoric of the eye," is used by Daniel in *Delia*, and in his *Queen's Arcadia* he speaks of "the silent rhetoricke of a looke."

So also the content, similar to Shakspeare and Drayton, is very general. This whole theme of common stock and common thought can be illustrated almost without limit. The farewell sonnets, the "care-charming sleep" sonnets, the "tournament" sonnets all illustrate this common possession. And this comparative study

may be extended to melody, rime, technique, and quatorzain characteristics generally. It is unwise to say that Shakspeare depended upon Drayton, or that Drayton depended upon Shakspeare. These two men came to London while the pastoral influence was waning and the sonnet influence was rising. Both were drawn into this latter movement. Both drew from a common reservoir. Immortality in verse, transitory beauty, the cruel Fair, the woes of the lover, sleep and night-thoughts, undesirable old age, and scores of such themes were employed by all. Every sonneteer shows traces of this community of possession. Each shows also an originality of his own.

This identity of sonnet motive and convention does away largely with the autobiographical phase of sonnet interpretation. And this affects our view of Drayton's relation to Anne Goodere.

Drayton's sonnets are entitled *Idea*. He employs the term often from 1593 to 1619. It is in his eclogues, sonnets, odes, the *Barons' Wars*, and *Polyolbion*. He preserves it in his 1619 folio; after this date I do not find the term in his writings. But the term, in his restricted sense, is not original with him. We may trace it back to Plato. Mr. Sidney Lee points out its French original. I have found the term in Sidney's *Arcadia*, Eclogue 1; in *Zepheria*, 14; *Amoretti*, 87; Fairfax's *Tasso*, I, 48; *Orchestra*, 100 and 130. Drayton's biographers all concede that he employed the term to designate Miss Anne Goodere, afterwards Lady Rainsford.

The question before us concerns the relation of our author to the lady whom he addressed. Was he a lover or only a friend? Was his devotion, in his writings, personal and passionate, or conventional and gallant? This is merely a special case of the general interpretation of the Elizabethan sonnet cycles. The lover theory holds that Drayton's work offers the tribute of a lover; that the sonnets are the most determined expression of his passion; that his love was not returned. He was poor; Anne belonged to a noble family and married in her circle. The theory holds that after her marriage Drayton continued a passionate devotion and wrote then his famous "love-parting"

Sonnet 61, "Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part." This sonnet is thus regarded as the culminating cry of his unrequited passion.

In opposition to all this, it may be urged that Drayton has addressed Anne Goodere in strains no more earnest or passionate than many another sonneteer has employed to an assumed mistress. At random, notice *Phillis*, 25, and *Delia*, 1. Many of Drayton's sonnets cannot possibly be interpreted as from the pen of a lover. Sonnet 9 seems to put his devotion upon a plane with Surrey's for Geraldine. This sonnet contains the line, "'Tis nine years now since first I lost my wits." Mr. Sidney Lee thinks this sonnet dates from the year 1594. At that time Drayton was thirty-one years of age and Anne not more than twenty-four. Consequently Drayton "lost his wits" to Anne Goodere, upon this interpretation, when he was twenty-two and she only fourteen or fifteen. This is possible. But it is not probable that Drayton entertained a passion for a girl of fifteen and kept it alive for more than twenty years after her marriage, while he continued to maintain the most cordial relations with both her father and her husband. The subjectivity of the sonnets is no greater than that of some of his other work. His *Heroical Epistles* are most objective; but they frequently show as genuine a love-strain as any passion in the sonnets. The lines between Henry and Rosamond are vigorous. Some of his lyrics, *Dowsabel*, the *Beta Song*, the *Daffodil Song*, the *Quest of Cynthia* are all as subjective and as passionate as even the so-called "love-parting" sonnet.

This Sonnet 61 is justly famous. It appeared first in the folio of 1619. We do not know when it was written. The usual interpretation upon it is that of a love-pang at the marriage of Anne Goodere to Henry Rainsford. This is a good illustration of how prepossession often twists a straight mind. The structure of the sonnet suggests a date much later than the marriage. Its metrical style differs from the stiffer, earlier sonnets. It has a freedom of movement that suggests a more experienced pen. Its rather elaborate use of personification suggests a date as late as the *Barons' Wars*, wherein we find fine illustrations of this same rhetorical device. As to its sentiment, the critics seem to have

shut their eyes to its sestet. A cursory reading of the final lines shows that it is not a love-parting theme, but a love-reconciliation.

That Drayton addressed Anne Goodere in the strain of a lover is not a tenable theory. He is one of a large group of poets that indulged in a conventional literary expression. *Idea* may not be as shadowy as the nominal idol of some other sonneteers; but Drayton's pen has addressed her only in terms of the gallantry of the age, the homage of a friend.

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